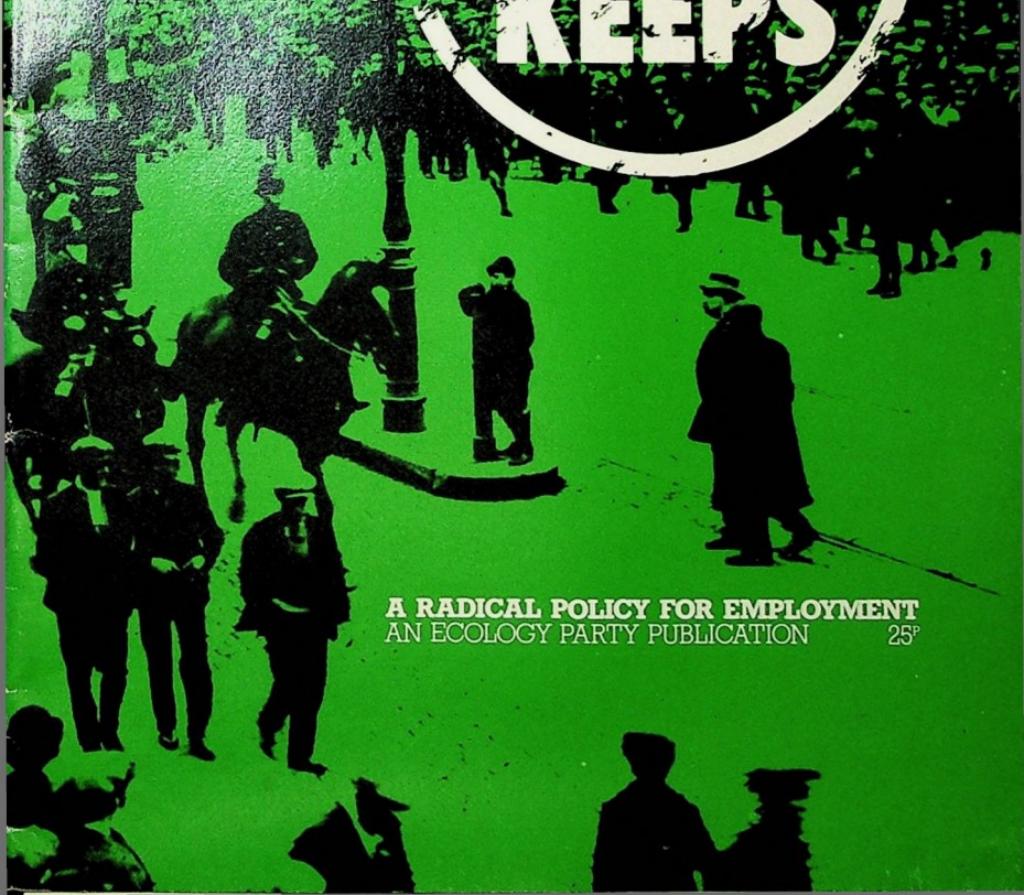
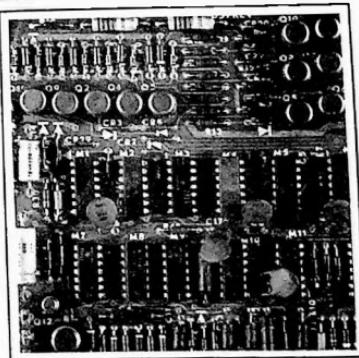
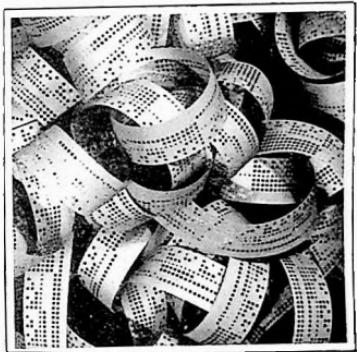


# **JOB FOR KEEPS**



**A RADICAL POLICY FOR EMPLOYMENT**  
AN ECOLOGY PARTY PUBLICATION

25p



This pamphlet is published by the Political Committee of the Ecology Party National Council, which is responsible for presenting Party policy at national level.

It is based on official policy as passed at Ecology Party Conferences, but without further committing the Party may amplify such policy in the light of current events.

*Jobs for Keeps* is a shortened version of the booklet *Working for a Future: An Ecological Approach to Employment* also published by the Political Committee.

Produced by Devon Print Group, Exeter.

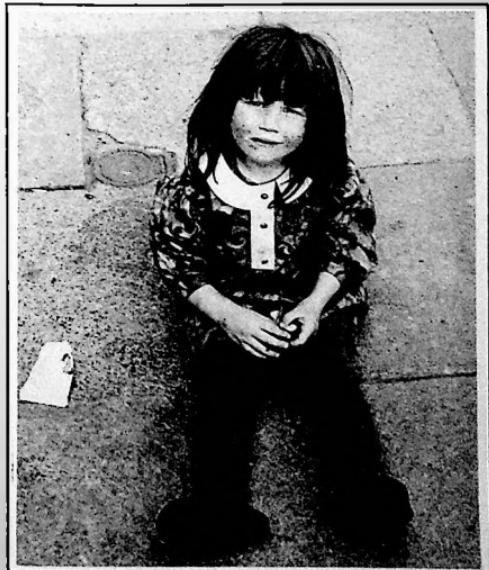
# **CONTENTS**

## *PART ONE LOSING JOBS*

- A Unemployment — the Challenge**
- B The Scale of the Problem**
- C The Failure of Conventional Remedies**
  - 1 "All you Need is Growth"
  - 2 Recent Political Developments
  - 3 Why Economic Growth Must Fail the Jobless
  - 4 The New Technology

## *PART TWO JOBS TO LAST*

- A Sustainable Employment**
- B The Transitional Economy**
  - 1 Striking the Balance
  - 2 Sustainable Enterprise
  - 3 Sustainable Security
  - 4 Sustainable Wealth
- C It Can Be Done**



## PART ONE LOSING JOBS



### A Unemployment — The Challenge

Unemployment is the greatest social problem which we face in Britain today.

It is not simply a question of the numbers involved — although these are higher than would have been believed possible only a few years ago. Nor is it just a matter of the distress behind the figures, grievous though that is.

Most disturbing of all, given the length of time the problem has been growing, is the helpless impotence of our politicians to do anything about it. Something is deeply wrong with our society when this can happen. For there is so much that cries out to be done, all around us. There ought to be more than enough work today for anyone who wants it. Yet our system goes on condemning us to the gigantic wastefulness of mass unemployment — the waste of human talents and energies. These are the most precious resources of all in our human world. They are being squandered, along with our material resources, as if there were no tomorrow.

Such a system cannot long keep the respect of its people. It does not deserve their respect. There are real dangers of instability and breakdown in that situation, and the politicians know it. Their promises of quick solutions become more dogmatic as their nervousness grows; but it is quite evident that none of the analyses and programmes

proposed, right across the spectrum of conventional politics from so-called 'radical' Toryism to the so-called 'radical' Left, begin to approach the true roots of the problem.

In this pamphlet we explain that failure. We also set out our own, genuinely radical proposals for a solution which will last — a programme of jobs for keeps. These are practical proposals, designed to start making a difference right away.

What distinguishes them from those of others is that they also try to strike the balance between real work, real needs and real resources which political thinking has so long neglected, and without which no permanent solution can be achieved.

We believe these ideas deserve the serious attention of anyone concerned to have in Britain a stable, just and democratic society employing the energies of all its people.

## B The Scale of the Problem

2,500,000 people were registered as unemployed in the Spring of 1981 — the highest number recorded since the Thirties. Many more are without work but do not even bother to register.

Unemployment has risen under each successive Government since 1966, and numbers are now increasing more rapidly than ever. Some have predicted five million out of work by 1990. The cost of even the present level is enormous — around £8,500 million a year in benefits paid, revenue lost and allied costs.

The cost to the individuals concerned is also high. Those who lose their jobs can suffer not only loss of income (in many cases bringing real hardship with it) but also loss of status in the community, in the eyes of their families and even in their own eyes. Most people rely on their jobs for comradeship and a sense of purpose in life as well as for money; to be robbed of all these can breed deep resentment. The young especially, many of whom see little prospect of ever gaining proper work, are becoming dangerously alienated.

Worst of all, while the unemployed are told that there is no work for them to do, they need only look around them to see plainly that this is nonsense. Children leave our schools unable to read or write properly while teachers cannot find posts. Tenants live in damp or poorly insulated homes next door to building workers without jobs. Consumer goods get shoddier and repair and maintenance services harder to find, while young craftsmen are first trained and then returned to the dole queues. Huge quantities of scarce materials are wasted because we do not organise the work of saving and recycling them. The prices of food and energy climb dramatically, and hungry old people die of hypothermia, while those who could be producing these necessities cheaply, stand idle. Our economic system is thoroughly out of balance when it produces this vast and bitter absurdity.

## C The Failure of Conventional Remedies

### 1 "All you Need is Growth"

Since before the last War, politicians of both Left and Right have had only one answer to the question of how to create and preserve full employment. That answer has been *economic growth* — to encourage manufacturing industry to produce more and people to consume more, so that expanding production generates jobs both within

industry and as a consequence throughout the economy.

By growth they have always meant expansion within the existing economic framework. Methods and emphases have differed, but the basic mixture has always been a blend of incentives, directed public expenditure, prices and incomes policy and State intervention in key sectors. Only the proportions of these ingredients have changed as Labour and Tory Governments have swapped around. The general consensus has never been in any doubt about fundamentals: if the managed mixed economy is to grow it has to be "rationalised" and "centralised" to achieve "economies of scale" so that production can be kept on the rise.

The trouble is that this approach just has not worked. For at least twenty years it has been in difficulties, and over the last decade its failure has become harshly obvious. Governments simply have not been able to overcome the built-in defect that their attempts to achieve higher economic growth have always resulted in rising inflation. If allowed to continue unchecked, this destroys jobs; but attempts to cope with the danger by dampening down demand have produced still worse unemployment. Expansionist strategies have been paralysed again and again by this contradiction.

## 2 Recent Political Developments

Three different reactions to this continuing failure may be observed in conventional politics.

The *Liberal and Social Democratic* approach is the most topical and in many ways the least appealing. It offers the same mixture as before, but with the label on the bottle changed. Once again we are promised the thriving mixed economy, plenty of Government intervention and investment, and a gimmick or two like profit-sharing to temper the bracing winds of competition. All that is new and radical about this is the cheek of calling it new and radical. The whole affair is nothing more than a confidence trick played on a worried electorate with the connivance of much of the media. That it should be swallowed so eagerly by so many thoughtful people shows what a state we are in.

*Thatcherism* was at least honest by its own lights. It aimed to reduce inflation by severe restrictions on the money supply and on Government spending, to stimulate demand by cutting taxes and thus create new jobs in revitalised industries. It departed from the post-war consensus in its bold acceptance that this would mean — "at the outset" — not only very much higher unemployment, but also a sharp reduction in public services. This was held to be a necessary discipline; meanwhile the Government would see us through to the sunlit uplands beyond, by firmness in pursuit of its monetary targets.

It was never likely to work. Now, after the acknowledged catastrophe of Sir Geoffrey Howe's third Budget, it is in ruins. Taxation is higher than ever, the money supply is out of control, Government resolution over public sector pay deals is crumbling, firms collapse daily (including many of the smaller firms which the policy was supposed to revitalise) — and unemployment climbs towards three million with not the remotest prospect of a reduction in sight.

*The Left* claim that their alternative has not yet been tried in full. It involves massive public expenditure to reflate the economy centrally. The whole of our revenues from

North Sea Oil are to be staked in this giant gamble to boost production — and, in addition, quite clearly, a lot of money will just have to be printed. There will be unprecedented State intervention in industry to ensure that the benefits of this bonanza go where the Government wants.

A degree of State control and direction is proposed here which will hardly be accepted in Britain. People will not readily pawn their freedom, even to pursue the illusion of conventional full employment.

But in any case, the odds are overwhelmingly against the success of any such strategy. The reason for this is fundamental. It underlies the failure of all the other approaches too. *It is quite simply that economic growth cannot any longer generate lasting employment.*

### 3 Why Economic Growth Must Fail the Jobless

Economic growth — expansion of the centralised capital - and energy-intensive formal economy — cannot any longer be relied upon to generate an overall increase in employment. Indeed growth on this pattern has *declining* employment built into it for the future. From the ecological perspective this statement can be seen for the plain truth it is.

From such a perspective it is evident that the real costs of the whole industrial system are rising rapidly. They are doing so because we are approaching limits imposed by the Earth's resources. As these costs, which cannot be evaded, continue to rise they must work their way through to higher prices — and this is what causes the inflation that affects industrial economies, the creeping inflation which destroys jobs as fast as they can be artificially created.

What are these real costs?

*Rising Energy Costs:* Our economy depends on massive inputs of fossil fuel energy. The clear trend is for oil and other fuel costs to rise steadily, and as resources are depleted and extraction and development costs correspondingly increase, the trend is bound to continue. Nor can North Sea Oil rescue us from this situation for long.

*Raw Materials Costs:* Industrialism feeds greedily on raw materials — but reserves are finite. As supplies diminish so world prices increase; this is already occurring for many essential metals such as aluminium, lead and tin. Once the cost of a raw material increases, it is inevitable that the price of finished products will increase too.

*Spin-Off Costs:* The scale of these is enormous, far greater than traditional economics has ever admitted. They are now increasing exponentially. There are distribution costs, in a society which scorns local production; the costs of our vast wasteful bureaucracies; the costs of coping with the pollution and rubbish which industrial society produces in such huge quantities. And then there are the spiralling medical, welfare and crime prevention costs which must be included because our society damages people's health and breaks up their communities.

*Personal Costs:* Most people want to work at producing good, useful things in which they can take pride. Too often the way we organise work reduces them to button-pushers, or forces them to help produce rubbish. Human beings can only take so much of this, even to earn a living. Beyond a certain point their natural resentment emerges as tension in industrial relations, absenteeism, indifference and the drive to

push up wages and salaries in sheer compensation for their sacrificed humanity.

All of these factors keep the costs of production constantly on the rise. These costs passed on to the consumer as price rises of course provoke further pay demands — and so the whole inflationary spiral continues, destroying jobs as it goes.

#### **4 The New Technology**

As if all this were not enough, we must also reckon with the totally unprecedented impact of the new micro-electronic technology on employment patterns in the economy.

This technology can be applied to improve efficiency and productivity across all manufacturing, service and distributive industries. Its whole point is to do this by *reducing* employment. And given the logic of industrialism, the emphasis on production and consumption, there can be no doubt that it will be applied in that way.

Authoritative estimates have predicted that 60% of all occupations could be at risk. 1.8 million jobs could be lost in the manufacturing sector alone over the next fifteen years, many of them in areas of traditionally skilled work. The service sector and all kinds of office work are even more vulnerable — here over 4 million jobs may well be lost in the same period. Compared with this broad swathe cut through conventional employment, the job-creating potential of micro-technology is tiny — a few new products, a few electronic toys, a few thousand jobs at most.

It must be emphasised very strongly that those who argue for growth and expansion of the economy are inescapably arguing for this job-destructive development, as well as all the others outlined.

So one thing should now be abundantly clear. Attempts to solve the problem of unemployment through expansion of the industrial economy are doomed to failure.

*It is in fact a classic case of filling the bath with the plug out. The difference between the policies of the conventional Parties in this respect amounts to the difference between trying to do this by running the hot tap, by running the cold tap or by running both together.*

## PART TWO JOBS TO LAST



### A Sustainable Employment

It can now be seen just how radical — in the true sense of attacking the roots of the problem — must be any serious solution to unemployment.

The first and fundamental principle of any such solution must be that new jobs made to last can only be generated through economic activity which is *not* vulnerable to the inflationary and technological pressures described. We must look for the jobs which will always need doing, and for ways of doing them which can always be sustained. That means always working within the limits imposed by the Earth's resources and by human nature.

In the *primary sector* of the economy there is enormous scope for employment. We shall always need energy and food, and Britain could be far more self-sufficient in these than it is. Indeed it will shortly have to be. At present we obtain most of our primaries from abroad in exchange for the manufactured goods which we export. But our manufacturing base is declining, the prices of our goods must go on rising, and their competitiveness in world markets will continue to fall. As energy and resource constraints on industrial production start to bite fiercely, it will increasingly be primaries which will form the 'hard currency' of the world economy.

But production, even of food and energy, requires an input of energy — and this must increasingly be *human* energy, or we are just going in a circle. We cannot hope to increase our food production by employing more oil-burning machinery and oil-based fertilisers — the oil won't be there. The same argument applies to the huge energy investment needed to build nuclear power stations, even were these not unacceptable on other grounds. Sustainable primary production has to be much more *labour intensive* than we have been used to for many years. And so does the necessary accompaniment, conservation: a national home insulation scheme, for instance, would have to employ building trades workers up and down the country.

We must also look for ways of producing as many as possible of our *goods and services* independently of the declining conventional economy. We must look for small-scale, localised production, co-operative in its organisation and therefore responsive to changing local needs. We must look for production to last, not to throw away — and this means making things as human beings ought to make them, with care and love. We must redevelop the highly labour-intensive repair and maintenance trades. We must look for the supply of many services by communities for themselves, drawing flexibly and creatively on the talents of local people.

Clearly a society in which the economic balance had shifted in this direction would be a rather different society from the one we have at present — though the charge that it would be 'a return to the Dark Ages' is just hysterical. There are many who would argue that it would in fact be a better society simply in itself: more responsible and more humane. There are many more who are now ready to acknowledge that some such alternative will *have* to be developed, as the limits of our planet's capacity to support full-blooded industrialism draw ever nearer. We contend that in any event it is the only sort of society which can *now* guarantee lasting work for all who want it.

*Such a society is no mere ideal goal. The transition towards it could be started in Britain tomorrow. And we could make that start with measures to relieve the plight of those who are today without work or hope of work.*

## B The Transitional Economy

### 1 Striking the Balance

When people talk about "the economy", they generally mean what we have called in this pamphlet the *formal* economy: they mean conventional production of goods and services, providing full-time taxed employment at fixed rates — highly capital-intensive, based on towns and cities and often centrally planned.

But there is always a lot else going on, outside this framework, which should equally be recognised as economic activity — work done to provide material benefits. It includes part-time work, "domestic" or self-service activities, community and voluntary work, and self-employment both "official" and "unofficial" (the "moonlighting" of the so-called black economy). We term all this the *informal economy* to distinguish it from the formal. But this does *not* mean that it is somehow all casual or second-best. In fact, as everyone knows, such work very often calls forth far more of people's skills and creativity than do their "real" jobs; and often, too, far more of genuine value is produced.

The crucial points about "informal" economic activity are, firstly, that it is highly

*flexible*: it is locally based and responds to the changing needs of the people it serves. Unlike formal activity it does not depend on massive fixed assets, capital commitments, expensive advertising and marketing, or over-complex systems of legislation and negotiation. Secondly, it is *sustainable*: it can make careful use of scarce materials just because of the small scale of its operations, and it does not require great inputs of precious fossil-fuel energy. Most of its energy, indeed, comes from *people*.

The informal economy is at present squeezed to the margins — a kind of additional, "poor-relation" sector of the economy, seen from the conventional viewpoint. *But as a way of working, it shows us what work for keeps must be like.*

The radical strategy which we must pursue is therefore clear. We must find "informal" ways of meeting many needs which people now look to the formal economy to meet. In parallel, we must carefully manage the decline of that formal economy, so that those areas of it which remain will provide a leaner, healthier framework.

## *2 Sustainable Enterprise: Local Production for Real Needs*

We have to revitalise the economy "from the bottom up". Informal activity must be encouraged to grow from the natural local roots — it would be self-defeating to try to organise it centrally. Sustainability depends on economic as well as political decentralisation.

A nationwide network of *Community Employment Agencies* should be established. These Agencies would take over the job-finding role of existing Job Centres, but they would interpret it much more imaginatively: their prime task would be to *stimulate* locally based employment.

They would monitor all skills available and required. Working closely with schools, craft and professional bodies, they would ensure that appropriate training and retraining schemes were provided at local Skills Centres, which they would manage. They would provide free practical and financial advice to those wanting to set up new local businesses. They would help organise markets for local home production. These Agencies would be the focal points for economic regeneration in each locality.

*Community Savings Banks* should also be set up to work closely with the Community Employment Agencies. Their job would be to channel local finance into local enterprises. Their rates of interest could be very low — they would not be aiming for the disgracefully large profits of the big banks. The local knowledge of their associated Agencies would enable them to risk their funds very productively — they would support the kind of small businesses or home-based ventures which conventional banks would not touch.

These local Banks would have to have their deposits topped up by Central Government funds in the early years of the scheme — they would provide a much more efficient means of applying public money for job creation than the multi-billion pound, centrally-administered transfusions to ailing industries which we see at present.

Such "local reflation" would have an enormous advantage over the conventional approach — it would work to reduce prices. The kind of small enterprise involved

would have low costs and be able to charge very competitive prices. The big concerns, which have got used to a monopoly position where they can ignore the market and pass on all their costs to the consumer, would have to cut prices to stay in business. Thus we should have a kind of reflation which would combat inflation and provide jobs nationwide.

### *3 Sustainable Security: the National Income Scheme*

Informal economic activity depends to a large extent on people's willingness to work for variable rates of pay according to changing conditions of supply and demand. Part-time and voluntary working will also play a greater role.

People will only be prepared to accept such changes if their basic material security is absolutely guaranteed, and if there is a real redistribution of the national wealth to make social justice visible.

We therefore propose the phased introduction of a National Income/Tax Credit Scheme. When the scheme was in full operation the vast majority of social security benefits and all tax allowances would be replaced by a single automatic payment to everyone, which could be taken in cash or used as a credit against tax liability. These payments would be made *without qualification* and would be unaffected in value whatever other income was being received. In effect they would be a permanent national minimum income below which people *could not fall*.

At levels of payment comparable to present Supplementary Benefit assessment rates, the scheme would cost about £20 billion annually. This figure takes into account all the savings in social security benefits, tax allowances and associated spending which would result.<sup>1</sup>

Part of this cost would have to be met out of Government expenditure — nuclear weapons programmes, nuclear power stations and toys like Concorde would have to go. The rest would be raised through indirect taxation and through Income Tax, which under this scheme would be chargeable on all earned income. Since credits would be much more generous than existing personal tax allowances, new tax rates would be set to ensure that only those on lower incomes received any net financial gain. The result would be the most progressive taxation system Britain has ever seen.

These are radical proposals. But the gains from introducing such a scheme would be out of all proportion to its costs. The poverty trap would disappear — there would be no loss of National Income whatever one earned in addition, and so the incentive to work would be restored. An impossibly complex welfare benefits system would be simplified so that claimants could actually understand it.

Even more importantly, the rigid distinction between employment and unemployment which has developed in industrial society would begin to break down. In its place we should have a multitude of varying, interwoven patterns of work and leisure. We might rediscover an energy source which we have almost forgotten — the tremendous force of human creativity.

<sup>1</sup> For a costing in more detail and a suggestion about how the scheme could be phased in, see *Working for a Future: An Ecological Approach to Employment*, also published by the Ecology Party.

#### *4 Sustainable Wealth: Working for a Future*

Building up such alternatives to our present ways of working is crucial if we are to create lasting real wealth as well as providing jobs immediately.

The formal economy is also of crucial importance. It must decline, but for many years it will go on providing us with foreign exchange, home consumption and essential tax revenue. And there will always remain a 'formal' underpinning of the wealth of any sustainable economy.

Central Government has an important role to play in adapting the formal economy to face the future. We must begin by creating hundreds of thousands of jobs now — jobs for which the conventional Parties, hooked on old-fashioned notions of expansion, simply cannot see the need.

How are these jobs to be created?

*By a drive towards self-sufficiency:*

Finance should be provided to encourage food production at every level. The reclamation of derelict land must be a priority. There should also be an ambitious re-afforestation programme.

A massive safe-energy programme should be substituted for the spendthrift and lunatic 'nuclear economy'. Conservation of energy, including a national Home Insulation Scheme, should be funded as a matter of urgency.

Import controls should be introduced to provide selective protection for our economy (though the interests of Third World producers must be safeguarded where appropriate). Tariffs on imported food and raw materials will act as a Resources Tax, encouraging home production and the elimination of waste.

Recycling schemes for domestic and industrial waste should be introduced in all our towns and cities.

Powerful tax incentives should be provided for all repair and maintenance work.

*By adapting existing structures:*

Corporation Tax should be replaced by a Turnover Tax on cash flow to encourage large firms to decentralise into more manageable units. Encouragement should also be given to workers of all kinds to set up co-operative schemes. These smaller, more democratic units are much more likely than large companies to be sensitive to the needs of the communities where the workers actually live, and therefore to produce the socially useful things for which there will always be a market.

Work-sharing arrangements should also be encouraged. The disincentive to firms employing part-time workers should be diminished by phasing out the employer's element of the National Insurance levy, which now acts as a tax on jobs.

*By investment where it is really needed:*

There should be substantial investment in British Rail to provide the cheap and fuel-efficient transport which we shall increasingly need. The repair and extension of our canal system — unmatchable as a route for certain kinds of freight — should be mounted on a national scale.

Increased investment in the coal industry should seek to improve techniques, so that as many pits as possible can go on employing men to produce vital fuel.

Let us say clearly again: we are not talking about some distant ideal. This is a programme for here and now. Our plans for formal and informal economic renewal

offer the chance of employment to those who are jobless *today*.

But it is also a programme for tomorrow. It means that not only will there be work in future, but there will also be a future in which to work.

### C It Can Be Done

Even some who are sympathetic to the case we have made out in this pamphlet may ask whether our proposals are politically realistic. We call for significant adjustments in people's ways of working, yet our strategy does not appear to further the economic interests of any particular power group in society as against the others. And economic self-interest has long been the engine of all major social change. So in whose interest are our proposals? Who will fight for them?

We answer quite simply that our policies are in the interest — the plainest economic interest — of everyone.

A realistic alternative to otherwise inevitable decline and disintegration must be in everyone's interest. The stability of our society must be in everyone's interest.

Stability does not mean rigidity. It certainly does not mean any permanent fixing or freezing-in of existing inequalities and injustices. Nor does it mean a "strong hand on the tiller" — a dictatorial regime established in the name of "order". In fact, regimes of this kind, whether of Right or Left, are inherently *unstable* (though this will not stop people fleeing in desperation to such "solutions" if they can see no other alternative to chaos).

A truly stable society is one which can adapt to changing circumstances while preserving its fundamental identity. In Britain this means a social order which offers not only jobs, but a tolerant, humane and democratic way of life — for keeps.

Given the situation which now confronts us after two centuries of industrialism, only the sustainable society offers any prospects for such stability. The programme we have outlined for moving towards it is in the clear economic interest of the *jobless* — it offers them work now and work to last. It is in the interest of *entrepreneurs* — it offers the only reliable basis for future production. It is in the interest of *organised labour* — without it there will soon be little labour left to organise. It is in the interest of all who *invest*, whether individuals or firms or families — all who depend on there being a stable future. It is in the interest of our *children* whose lives that future will be.

It is in *your* interest.

What we have described can be done; the people of Britain must decide whether it will be done. The Ecology Party exists to offer them that choice.

## **Some Other Ecology Party Publications**

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A full explanation of our philosophy and principles.

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**2. The Real Alternative (25p)**

A short manifesto of the Party's policies.

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**3. The Reckoning (25p)**

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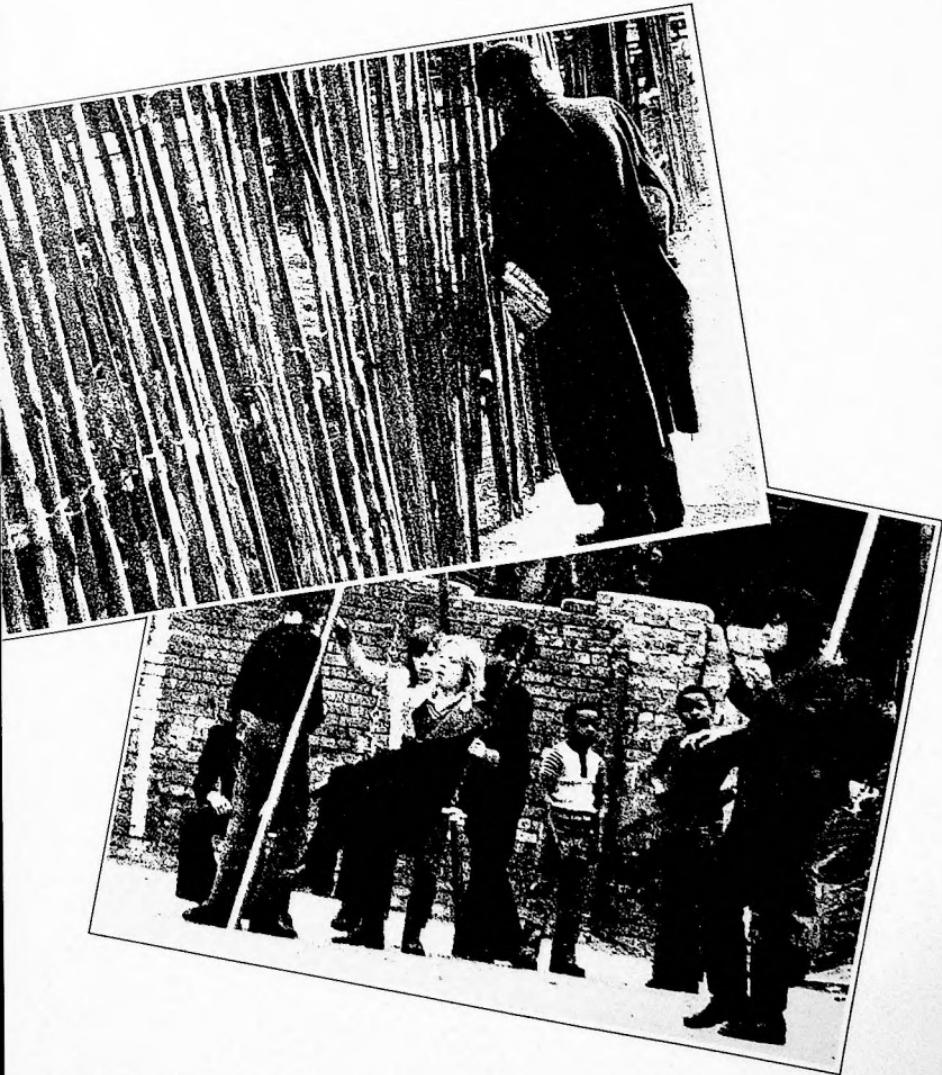
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# WORKING FOR A FUTURE

£3



An Ecological Approach  
to Employment

# WORKING FOR A FUTURE

This book, 'Working for a Future', is one of three\* simultaneous Ecology Party publications about work — and the reasons for people's lack of it in Britain today. It also examines the root causes of inflation, and puts forward radical, positive proposals for a restructuring of the British economy, that would assure every man, woman and child in these islands the basic necessities of human life — food, warmth, shelter, clothing and meaningful and satisfying work.

The British economic crisis has got conventional politicians and economists beaten. For over a decade, they have been working against unemployment, and only achieved inflation. Now, in the fight against inflation, unemployment is rising to levels that threaten the very foundation of our society. If ever a new economic approach was needed, it is now, and this book provides it.

Some of the ideas in this book are original; others come from widely-ranging sources. What makes the whole publication unique is the way the ideas have been moulded into a workable political programme, a plan of action, which could strike at the heart of the manifold decay of our society — the unemployment, the alienation, the violence, the boredom, the pollution, the environmental destruction.

This book is an Ecology Party publication. Rejecting the destructive imperatives of perpetual industrial expansion, which can only be suicidal in a finite world, the Ecology Party seeks to build a humane, peaceful, civilised society in balance with the natural world and living systems on which all life depends. The fact that the Party has grown by over ten times in less than two years shows that more and more people are coming to realise the crucial importance of this aim.



For more information about this book, or about Britain's fastest-growing radical political movement, write to the address below.

Price £1

Publication date April 29th 1981

## Technical Data

64 pages  
A5 (210 x 148 mm)  
Perfect Bound  
Limp backed  
2 colour cover

## Published by

Ecology Party  
36/38 Clapham Road  
London SW9 0JQ  
Tel. 01-735 2485

\* Jobs for Keeps (pamphlet) 25p.

Who's Not Working Now? (leaflet) 2p. each

An Ecology Party Publication